



## **Tribal Early Learning Initiative (TELI)**

### **Background**

The Tribal Early Learning Initiative (TELI) began in 2012 as a partnership between ACF and American Indian tribal entities with Region XI Head Start/Early Head Start, Tribal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), and Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (Tribal MIECHV) programs. The purposes of the TELI are to:

- Support tribes to coordinate tribal early learning and development programs
- Create and support seamless, high-quality early-childhood systems
- Raise the quality of services to children and families across the pregnancy-to-kindergarten-entry continuum
- Identify and break down barriers to collaboration and systems improvement.

From 2012-2015, ACF funded four tribes: the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (MT), the Pueblo of San Felipe (NM), and the White Earth Nation (MN). ACF provided focused technical assistance (webinars, regular calls, an on-site visit, an in-person meeting) and incentive funding to tribes to meet goals. Grantees had a great deal of flexibility to set local priorities and goals and develop individualized work plans and activities, with ACF's support and guidance.

The first four TELI grantees made major strides in improving their early childhood systems and services, starting with building strong relationships across programs. Funds were used by grantees to enhance the early childhood system and improve the quality of services across existing programs, rather than to provide new services. TELI grantee activities included creating a single tribal early learning program enrollment form, reviewing and agreeing upon common assessment tools, holding joint professional development opportunities and trainings for staff, jointly creating a community-based resource directory and updating it on a regular basis, allocating costs across early childhood program grants to provide more efficient and responsive services, and investing in data systems to allow for better coordination and sharing of relevant child and family data across programs. The TELI work also helped position some tribes to successfully apply for early childhood system building funds through ACF's Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships and SAMHSA's Project LAUNCH program. The vision, commitment, and creativity of the first group of TELI grantees are highlighted in a 2015 report, ["Tribal Early Learning Initiative: Collaborative Success"](#).

### **TELI Expansion**

In response to the success of the TELI pilot, ACF provided an opportunity for expansion of TELI, with new grants awarded in 2015. Eligible entities for this opportunity were Tribal MIECHV grantees that also have a Region XI Head Start and/or Early Head Start program and a Tribal CCDF program in at least one of the communities they serve. Six new awards were

announced in August of 2015: Cherokee Nation (OK), Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians (OR), Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (MT), and the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (WI).

Through this opportunity, tribal entities receive incentive awards to accomplish the goals of the TELI. The TELI Expansion also provides grantees with technical assistance tools and resources based on the “collective impact” model. Collective impact takes a strategic and data-driven approach to collaboration and systems development. It incorporates an infrastructure and process that leads to a common agenda and effective decision-making across tribal early learning programs, while allowing for tribally- and locally-driven flexibility in design and implementation of projects. The TELI Expansion also incorporates leadership and skill-building opportunities for the TELI leads at each site.

### **Objectives of the TELI Expansion**

1. Identify and analyze systems issues, including obstacles that could block efforts to build and maintain partnerships, fully and effectively coordinate tribal early childhood development programs, and identify strategies in line with tribal community values, traditions, and priorities
2. Develop tribally-driven goals and concrete objectives in each local tribal community for building effective and efficient early childhood systems, high quality programs, and improved outcomes for young children and families
3. Develop and carry out concrete community plans for supporting and strengthening cooperation, coordination, resource sharing and leveraging, and integration among programs that support young children and families in the tribal community
4. Share plans of action, barriers and challenges, opportunities and solutions, and the results of action plans with other tribal communities in an effort to further develop peer learning relationships

### **Timeline**

The TELI Expansion is expected to run from October 2015 through September 2018. The first year of the TELI Expansion will be focused on planning and the second and third years will be focused on implementing the TELI implementation plan.